

and a keyboard **506** to allow user input. Additionally, the computer system **500** may include a retractable illumination device **508** to illuminate both character keys **510** and function keys **512** of the keyboard **506**. The illumination device **508** may be raised up from and retracted into the chassis of the keyboard in the same manner as described for the laptop computer **500**.

A computer user may gain significant benefits from an illumination device in accordance with the invention. First, the user may operate their computer regardless of the lighting of the environment in which the user is located. The retractable illumination device may illuminate the keys of the keyboard such that the user may work efficiently in a dimly lit environment. When the user is in an environment with adequate external lighting, the illumination device on the base unit or keyboard may be retracted. Additionally, the illumination device should not obstruct normal operation of the computer system because of the location and retractable feature of the device.

While the invention has been disclosed with respect to a limited number of embodiments, numerous modifications and variations will be appreciated by those skilled in the art. It is intended, therefore, that the following claims cover all such modifications and variations that may fall within the true spirit and scope of the invention.

What is claimed is:

1. A laptop computer comprising:

a base unit having a top surface;
a display unit coupled to the base unit;
a keyboard coupled to the top surface of the base unit; and
an illumination device coupled to the base unit having a first position associated with an inactive state of the illumination device and a second position associated with an active state of the illumination device, wherein the illumination device is separate from the display unit and the keyboard.

2. The laptop computer of claim **1**, wherein the first position comprises a retracted position in which a top surface of the illumination device is substantially flush with the top surface of the base unit.

3. The laptop computer of claim **1**, wherein the second position comprises a raised position in which a top surface of the illumination device is above the top surface of the base unit.

4. The laptop computer of claim **1**, wherein the illumination device further comprises a lens element.

5. A laptop computer comprising:

a base unit having a top surface;
a keyboard coupled to the top surface of the base unit;
a display unit coupled to the base unit, the display unit comprising a display member; and
an illumination device coupled to the display unit having a first position associated with an inactive state of the illumination device and a second position associated with an active state of the illumination device, wherein the illumination device is separate from the display member and the keyboard.

6. The laptop computer of claim **5**, wherein the first position comprises a retracted position in which a top surface of the illumination device is substantially flush with the outer surface of the display unit, and the second position comprises a raised position in which the top surface of the illumination device is above the outer surface of the display unit.

7. The laptop computer of claim **5**, further comprising a slideable cover coupled to the illumination device, wherein the first position corresponds to the slideable cover substantially covering the illumination device, and the second position corresponds to the slideable cover substantially exposing the illumination device.

8. The laptop computer of claim **5**, wherein the illumination device further comprises a lens element.

9. A laptop computer comprising:

a base unit having a keyboard member;
a display unit, coupled to the base unit, having a display member;
a light source coupled to the display unit, the light source adapted to generate light, a first portion of said light to illuminate the display member; and
an illumination mechanism coupled to the display unit, the illumination mechanism adapted to illuminate a portion of the keyboard member using a second portion of said light, wherein the illumination mechanism is separate from the display member and the keyboard member.

10. The laptop computer system of claim **9**, wherein the display member comprises a liquid crystal display (LCD) and the light source comprises a backlight source.

11. The laptop computer system of claim **10**, wherein the backlight source comprises at least one light element.

12. The laptop computer system of claim **9**, wherein the illumination mechanism may be selectively activated and deactivated by a switch.

13. The laptop computer system of claim **9**, wherein the illumination mechanism may be selectively activated and deactivated by a slideable cover.

14. A keyboard module comprising:

a keyboard chassis having a top surface;
a plurality of keys coupled to the keyboard chassis; and
an illumination device having a light source and coupled to the keyboard chassis, the illumination device having a first position associated with an inactive state and a second position associated with an active state.

15. The keyboard module of claim **14**, wherein the first position comprises a retracted position in which a top surface of the illumination device is substantially flush with the top surface of the keyboard chassis.

16. The keyboard module of claim **14**, wherein the second position comprises a raised position in which a top surface of the illumination device is above the top surface of the keyboard chassis.

17. The keyboard module of claim **14**, wherein the illumination device further comprises a lens element.

18. A laptop computer comprising:

a base unit having a top surface;
a keyboard coupled to the top surface of the base unit;
a display unit coupled to the base unit, the display unit having an outer surface;
an illumination device coupled to the display unit having a first position associated with an inactive state of the illumination device and a second position associated with an active state of the illumination device; and
a slideable cover coupled to the illumination device, wherein the first position corresponds to the slideable cover substantially covering the illumination device, and the second position corresponds to the slideable cover substantially exposing the illumination device.